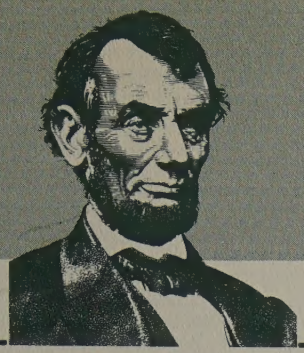


Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1442 FORT WAYNE, INDIANA April, 1958

THE LINCOLNS: PIONEER HORSE BREEDERS AND RACING ENTHUSIASTS.

The Lincolns, like most Kentucky pioneers were interested in good horseflesh. The president's father and uncle, while living in Kentucky, were able in a small measure to make a contribution to the improvement of the blood lines of Kentucky horses. This early interest in horses, manifested by Kentuckians, accounts for the Blue-Grass State's present-day fame on the turf.

Interest in blooded horses was handed down from pioneer father to pioneer son in the Lincoln family. While it is true that the younger generations of the Lincolns did not become leaders in the enterprise, nevertheless, they were interested in the thoroughbred and saddle horse. Contemporary accounts reveal that the president was a skilled horseman, and in his youth enjoyed a good horse race, as well as acting as an official at rural race tracks.

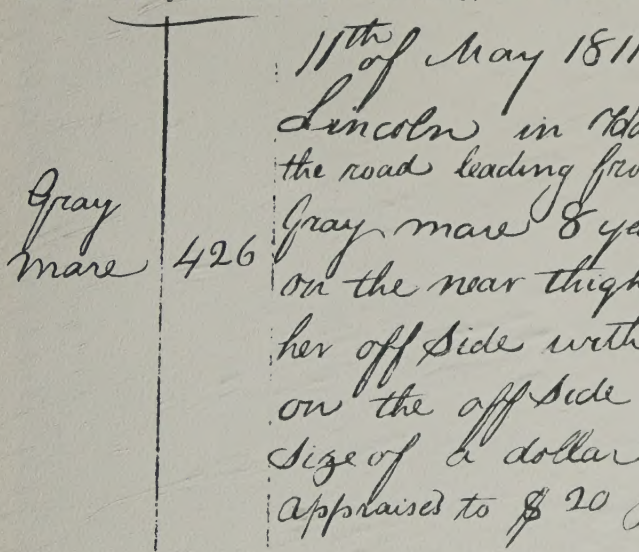
The interest of the pioneer Lincolns in this particular avocation is not surprising, as the state of Kentucky was, and is ideally situated for such an enterprise. Pioneer Kentuckians immediately sensed the possibilities of the horse industry. On May 27, 1785, the first law-making body of Kentucky met, and after providing for "courts" and the "common defense," this significant record was made: "On the motion of Mr. Boone (Daniel Boone) leave is given to bring in a bill for improving the breed of horses."

It is believed that the Lincolns, on their migration from Virginia to Kentucky in the year 1782, used horses for transportation, and in the establishment of their new home these animals probably became an important factor. Captain Abraham Lincoln, the President's grandfather, after a four year residence in Kentucky, was killed by an Indian. The inventory of his estate, compiled by the appraisers on March 10, 1789, indicated that he owned along with other property: "one sorrel horse valued at eight (English) pounds and one black horse valued at nine pounds and ten shillings." The evaluation of these two horses by appraisers indicates that they were exceptionally fine animals, likely being bred at the Virginia stables of John Lincoln, the father of Abraham Lincoln, Senior.

The widow of the deceased Captain moved with her five children from Jefferson County to Washington County, Thomas Lincoln, the father of the president, was the youngest of the three sons, being about ten years of age at the time of his father's death. Their new neighbor, John Caldwell, who was probably a relative of the family, was appointed in the year 1788, as administrator of the estate. Caldwell owned one of the finest stallions in Kentucky. On March 22, 1788 this advertisement appeared in the *Kentucky Gazette*, published at Lexington, Kentucky: "Darius, the fastest horse in Kentucky, will make the season at John Caldwells in Nelson county."

This fine stallion must have been greatly admired by Mordecai, Josiah, and Thomas, the three orphaned sons. While living as a neighbor to the Caldwells, Thomas Lincoln not only had an opportunity to see the fastest horse in Kentucky, but here in all probability he and his older brother Mordecai, became interested in bloodstock production.

Mordecai received the bulk of the Lincoln estate through the law of primogeniture and it was probably due to his close business relationship with John Caldwell


Gray
mare
426
11th of May 1811 Taken up by Thomas
Lincoln in Hardin County on Knob Creek on
the road leading from Bardstown to Nolin a A
Gray mare 8 years old 14 hands high Branded
on the near thigh but not legible a scar on
her off side with a dark Spot on her neck
on the off side under the main about the
size of a dollar a Sore Back trots Natural
appraised to £ 20 Peter Atherton A P HL

Entry 426—Hardin County (Ky.) Record of Estrays—1806-1815

that he became a horse breeder. Mordecai purchased the "celebrated stallion" called Strong Sampson. In addition to this horse, he also owned at the same time five other horses. These were likely selected brood mares. Early records show that one of the five horses mentioned was a "valuable brown mare."

While Mordecai Lincoln may have operated a successful breeding stable, he had some unfortunate circumstances befall his interests. Because of a misunderstanding concerning the purchase price of Strong Sampson, Lincoln brought suit against Coonrod Matthis, the former owner of the stallion. The suit was eventually won by Lincoln after extensive litigation lasting more than six years.

One of the most discouraging incidents in the career of this pioneer horse breeder was the loss of a valuable brown mare. While Mordecai was on a visit to the town of Springfield, the county seat of Washington County, Kentucky, he left his mare in the care of a tavern keeper named William Pile. Upon calling for the mare she could not be found. A suit was brought before the court by Lincoln against Pile: "Mordecai Lincoln complains of William Pile in custody of a plea of trespass on the case whereas the Deft. . . . at the parish of Kentucky aforesaid was a public inn keeper, in the town of Springfield . . . the plaintiff was possessed of a brown mare of the value of twenty-five pounds, and did deliver said mare into the hands and keeping of said Deft., as tavern keeper to keep said mare for pay and restore said mare when requested to the plaintiff who was at that time the said Deft's. guest. Nevertheless the Deft. did so careless and neglectfully attend to the mare of the plaintiff that she, the said mare, was lost or stolen out of the possession of the keeping of the Deft."

The jury awarded Lincoln the sum of ten pounds, or $48.50. As few horses were appraised for more than five pounds as early as March 1800, the date of the suit, it must be concluded that the sum of ten pounds was an exceptionally high evaluation for a court to place on a horse. The fact that Mordecai valued the mare at twenty-five pounds must indicate it was a splendid animal.

A compilation of entries from the Commissioner's Tax Books of Hardin County reveals that Thomas Lincoln listed for taxes as many as four horses at one time during his residence in Kentucky:

1804—Linkhorn, Thomas—1 Horse
1805—Linkhorn, Thomas—1 Horse
1806—Linkhorn, Thomas—
1807—Linkhorn, Thomas—1 Horse
1808—Linkhorn, Thomas—1 Horse
1809—Linkhorn, Thomas—2 Horse
1810—Linkhorn, Thomas—2 Horse
1811—Lincoln, Thomas—1 Horse
1812—Lincoln, Thomas—3 Horse
1813—Lincoln, Thomas—2 Horse
1814—Lincoln, Thomas—3 Horse
1815—Lincoln, Thomas—4 Horse (1 Stallion)
1816—Lincoln, Thomas—4 Horse

Out of 104 (tithables) taxpayers shown in the Commissioner's Book for the year 1815, only six other residents of the county had as many horses as Thomas Lincoln. The fact that he was required to pay an extra fee to own a stallion for breeding purposes indicates his interest in the improvement of blooded stock. Although the limited financial status of the president's father did not allow him to own as finely bred horses as his older brother, there are many indications of his interest along this line.

On October 10, 1814, the year Thomas Lincoln owned three horses, he purchased at the Jonathan Joseph sale, held at the court house door in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, "one curry comb." The purchase price was sixty-three cents. As the curry comb was seldom used by farmers on their work horses, this indicates that Thomas kept his horses in a well groomed condition.

While living on Knob Creek in the year 1811, Thomas "took up" an estray gray mare and listed it on the "Book of Estrays" as required by law. The detailed description of this gray mare indicates that Lincoln was a close observer of the distinguishing marks of horses. The original estray notice follows: "Taken up by Thomas Lincoln in Hardin county on Knob Creek, on the road leading from Bardstown to Nolin, a gray mare, eight years old, fourteen hands high, branded on the near thigh but not legible, a scar on her off side, with a dark spot on her neck on the off side under the mane about the size of a dollar, a sore back, trots naturally, appraised to twenty dollars."

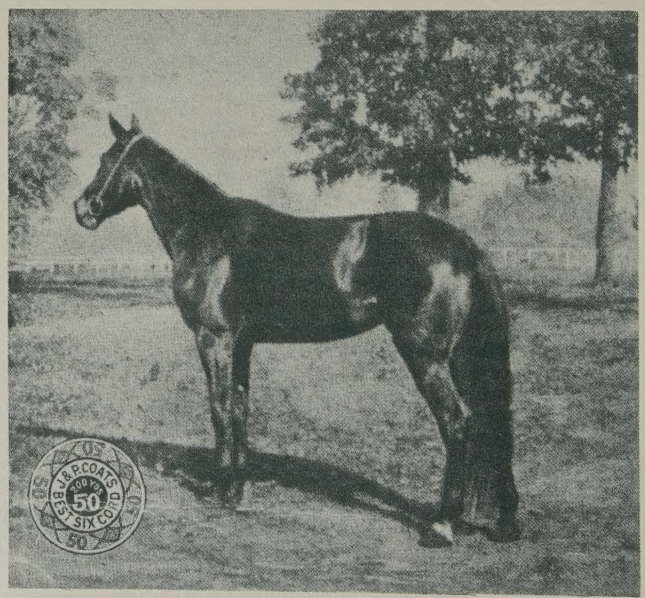
Horse racing, the sport of kings, was a favorite recreation of the early citizens of pioneer Kentucky. Because of these early racing meets, Kentucky was able to establish prestige in this field of recreation. An advertisement in the *Kentucky Gazette* for August 22, 1789, announced a fall meet at Lexington: "A purse race at Lexington on the 2nd Thursday next, free for any mare, horse or gelding, weight for age, agreeable to the rules of New Market. 3 mile heats, the best two in three; one-quarter of an hour between heats allowed for rubbing . . ."

While the Lincolns were living in Kentucky there were several race tracks in Hardin County. They were called "race paths" and the race was called a "course." The best race path in the county was located at Middle Creek, midway between Hodgenville and Elizabethtown, called Martin's Turf. This course was used while Abraham Lincoln lived in Kentucky, and it was only about eight miles from the South Fork of Nolin River farm.

A "corn list made and run for on Middle Creek" in the year 1810, listed thirty prominent citizens of Hardin County and the number of bushels of corn donated by them for purses for the different events. The total number of bushels of corn donated for the 1810 event amounted to five hundred and twenty in all. The corn list follows: "We the undersigned wishing to improve the breed of horses in Hardin county do for that purpose propose a course, race to be run on Martin's Turf on Middle Creek, on the third Thursday, Friday and Saturday in October next, to be free for any horse, mare or gelding owned by an residenter of Hardin county at this time: to run the first day three miles and repeat, the second day two miles and repeat, the third day one mile and repeat. To be run under the rules and direction of the Lexington Jockey Club, for which we, the undersigned, do oblige ourselves to pay the quantity of corn opposite our names, to the winners by their demanding it, between the first day of December next and the twenty-fifth, as witness our hands this 13th day of August, 1810."

On such an important occasion it is probable that the Thomas Lincoln family was present. As many of the men on the corn list were church members it is likely that they were allowed by their strict pioneer ministers to attend, even though the early churches frowned upon the affairs. Possibly the clause "wishing to improve the breed of horses" gained the approval of the church officials.

The minutes of the Severns Valley Baptist Church, dated October 22, 1802 reveal a disapproval of horse



Nancy Hanks
The Champion Trotting Mare, Record 2.04. Pedigree: Happy Medium, dam Nancy Lee, by Dicator, (brother of Dexter).

races: "Some of the members informed the church of Brother John Haycraft's misconduct in riding his horse around the race ground." The date of this entry clearly indicates that race paths existed in Hardin County as early as 1802.

Promiscuous betting on horses was also engaged in by the early residents of Hardin County. The suit of Hanks vs. Williamson for the payment of a note likely resulted because of a horse race. Williamson charged "that note was won on a bet on a horse race, which makes it fraudulent." Hank stated, "it was not a bet on a horse race." The note, nevertheless, was dated November 7, 1810, about two weeks after the big race at Middle Creek.

It has been discovered that in 1808 Joseph Hanks, a relative of Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks, bought a black colt and a fine saddle at a sale. Very likely he rode this colt at the Middle Creek race, and it may be supposed that the Hanks vs. Williamson suit resulted in bets placed on the black colt.

The Middle Creek race of 1810 was undoubtedly the outstanding sporting event of that community for many years. It was conducted under the Lexington Jockey Club rules and was not unlike a similar meet held in Lexington the same year. The provisions of the Lexington meet were as follows: "The first day the heat was to be four miles and the purse $150. The second day the heat was two miles, and the purse was the entrance money of the two preceding days. The horses were to start each day at twelve o'clock and carry weight as follows: aged horses, 126 pounds; six years old, 122 pounds; five years old, 114 pounds; four years old, 100 pounds; three years old, 86 pounds. The riders were to be dressed in silk or satin jackets and wear caps."

Another important race path from the standpoint of its Lincoln association was located on the Merrifield property, adjacent to the Lincoln birthplace farm. This race course was later destroyed by a citizen who sought to uplift the morals of the community. It was at this race path, situated only one-half mile from the Lincoln cabin home, that the pioneers trained their horses for the more important meets in the county.

When the Lincoln family moved to Indiana it is likely that they retained their interest in horses, but the new country in which they made their home afforded few opportunities to engage in the popular Kentucky sport. However, it is not at all unlikely that many unofficial racing meets were held in backwoods Indiana which were either witnessed by or participated in by some of the members of the Lincoln family.

Once the Lincolns were settled in Illinois, Abraham moved on to New Salem. While living in this rural community he came in contact with a fast, wild, rollicking crowd of young men from Clary's Grove, who would gamble or fight at the drop of a hat. These men were interested in horse racing, and on many occasions races were held in the village.

These sporting events were held on West Main Street in New Salem; the race either starting or ending near the Berry & Lincoln store. On Saturdays the men living in the surrounding communities rode into the town on their favorite horses, anxious to race and bet on their favorites to win, place or show.

When these races were held Abraham Lincoln perhaps many times acted as a judge. Undoubtedly his Kentucky background caused him to be considered an authority on the rules and procedures of a meet. He must have established a name for himself as a racing official, because Stephen A. Douglas on one occasion while engaged in the Lincoln-Douglas debates made the following statement concerning his abilities along this line: "The dignity and impartiality with which he (Lincoln) presided at a horse race or fist fight excited the admiration and won the praise of everybody that was present and participated."

The establishment of the Thomas Lincoln stable of horses on Knob Creek during the last few years of his Kentucky residence may account for the horse breeding farms located there today. Knob Creek has always been famous for its horses. Many beautiful saddle horses shown both in New York and Chicago have been raised and trained on the farm adjoining the Lincoln tract. Red Light, at one time the champion saddle horse in America, was the product of a Knob Creek breeding stable.

During the years 1871 to 1873 General George Armstrong Custer with a battalion of soldiers was stationed in Elizabethtown, to control the Ku Klux Klan and Carpetbaggers, and to break up illicit distilleries which had sprung up during the Civil War. While stationed in this community his men were able to procure fine horses from the town and surrounding country. The Seventh Cavalry because of these excellent horses probably became the best mounted troop of the entire regular army. When Custer and his command were massacred by the Sioux Indians on June 25, 1876, the seasoned soldiers were mounted on Kentucky horses. Undoubtedly many of the horses were purchased in the Knob Creek community, although it would be mere conjecture to say some were of the strain of the Lincoln stock.

The name of Lincoln's mother became a household word to a past generation of horse breeders because of the records of a champion trotting mare named Nancy Hanks. Her record was 2.04 and her pedigree listed the names of Happy Medium and the dam Nancy Lee which was by Dictator, a brother of Dexter. During the years that this trotting mare was being raced, she became almost more famous than the woman for whom she was named.

While the fame of the mare Nancy Hanks was still at its height, a group of Kentucky horse breeders, in order to appropriately celebrate in their own way the one hundredth anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birth, on February 12, 1809, held a reception of horses in the President's honor.

A newspaper account, taken from the *South Bend* (Indiana) *Times* on the anniversary date, reported the event as follows: "Nancy Hanks, former champion of the trotting turf was hostess at a reception at Hamburg Place Stud (Lexington, Kentucky,) today which was attended by many of the most famous horses in the world as aside from those quartered on the same farm, others were present from the farm of W. E. Stokes, Walnut Hill Farm, Harkness, and other breeders near by. The reception was the unique plan of John E. Madden to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, the noted mare having been named for the mother of the martyred President. At the celebration this morning in the presence of several hundred people, Madden christened the yearling daughter of the mare 'Mary Todd' in honor of the wife of Lincoln."

The famous mare is buried on the Madden farm at Hamburg place, on the Winchester pike, about two miles from Lexington. Her grave is appropriately marked with a granite stone and a bronze plate. It cannot be said with credit to the American people that up until twenty-five or thirty years ago the grave of the trotting mare was more appropriately marked in Kentucky than the grave of Lincoln's mother in Indiana.

While Lincoln was president there were many accounts of his appearance on horseback. He is described as being a fine horseman, who could so completely manage a horse as to establish himself immediately as its master. Many of his oft-repeated stories and jokes also concerned horses, racing and horse trades. With the possible exception of our military presidents, it may be said that Lincoln was one of the best horsemen ever to be elected to the presidency.

The interest of the Lincoln family in the "Sport of Kings" should be one of the cherished traditions of the sporting world.

See Louis A. Warren's "Lincoln's Parentage and Childhood", The Century Co., 1926

Heroic Lincoln Statues In Bronze

Heroic Lincoln Statues in Bronze is the title of an illustrated folder published in 1957 by the Lincoln National Life Foundation, Fort Wayne Indiana. The numerical list of statues, numbering seventy-six studies, are arranged according to the date of dedication, ranging from 1869 to 1956. The name of the sculptor of each statue is given along with the location by cities and towns. Copies are available upon request.

CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1957 - 1958

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Arnold Gates, 288 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 2 Masterson Road, Bronxville, N. Y.; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenilworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Richard F. Lufkin, 45 Milk Street, Boston, 9, Mass.; Robert L. Kincaid, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tenn.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Ill.; William H. Townsend, 310 First National Bank Bldg., Lexington 3, Ky.; and Clyde C. Walton, Jr., Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.

New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

1957

KIMMEL, STANLEY **1957-42**

Mr. Lincoln's Washington/Stanley Kimmel/Coward-McCain, Inc. New York.

Book, cloth, 8¾" x 11¼", 224 pp., illus., price $7.50.

COLMAN, CHARLES H. **1957-43**

The Lincoln-Douglas Debate/at/Charleston, Illinois/ September 18, 1858/Charles H. Coleman/(photo)/Eastern Illinois University Bulletin/ No. 220 October 1, 1957/(Cover title).

Book, flexible boards, 5½" x 8¼", 107 pp., fr., illus.

KYLE, OTTO R. **1957-44**

Abraham Lincoln/in Decatur/ By Otto R. Kyle/Editor of the Decatur Review editorial page/ (device)/Vantage Press. New York/Washington. Hollywood. Toronto.

Book, cloth, 5½" x 8¼", 176 pp., fr., price $3.00.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY **1957-45**

Lincoln Memorial University Press/Fall 1957/Vol. 59. No. 3/ Lincoln Herald/A Magazine devoted to historical/research in the field of Lincolniana and/the Civil War, and to the promotion/of Lincoln Ideals in American Education.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 7" x 10", 30 pp., illus.

CORWIN, STANLEY **1957-46**

(Sketch of smooth faced Lincoln)/The Rivalry/(Sketch of Douglas)/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 9" x 12", (34) pp., illus. Descriptive illustrated program of a drama of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates.

LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION **1957-47**

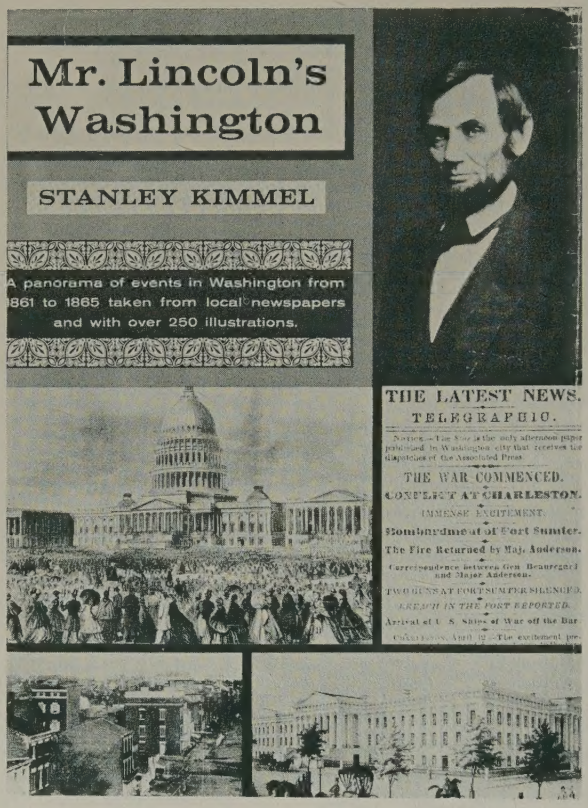
Heroic Lincoln Statues/in Bronze/(statue photo)/ Abraham Lincoln the Hoosier Youth/This statue by Paul Manship was dedicated on September 16, 1932 in the plaza of the home office building of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company of Fort Wayne/ . . . / . . . / (Cover title.)

Folder, paper, 5½" x 8½", (3) pp., illus.
Contains numerical list: Date of dedication, sculptor, and place, also location by cities and towns.

MONAGHAN, JAY **1957-48**

William Wyles and/the Wyles Collection/A Brief Description by/Jay Monaghan/University of California/ Santa Barbara College/Goleta, California/1957.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 5¼" x 8¼", 4 pp.


Mr. Lincoln's Washington
STANLEY KIMMEL
A panorama of events in Washington from 1861 to 1865 taken from local newspapers and with over 250 illustrations.
THE LATEST NEWS.
TELEGRAPHIC.
THE WAR COMMENCED.
CONFLICT AT CHARLESTON.
IMMENSE EXCITEMENT.
Bombardment of Fort Sumter.
The Fire Returned by Maj. Anderson.
TWO GUNS AT FORT SUMTER SILENCED.
Arrival of U. S. Ships of War off the Bar

LORANT, STEFAN **1957-49**

Lincoln/A Picture Story of His Life/(device)/by Stefan Lorant/Revised and Enlarged Edition/Harper & Brothers New York.

Book, cloth, 9½" x 12¾", 304 pp., illus., price $7.50.

McNEER, MAY **1957-50**

America's/Abraham Lincoln/May McNeer/Illustrated by Lynd Ward/1957/Houghton Miffin Company Boston/ The Riverside Press Cambridge.

Book, cloth, 7" x 9½", 119 pp., illus., price $3.50. America's Series, Volume four. Ages 9-14.

O'CONNELL, MARGARET J. **1957-51**

Margaret J. O'Connell/Lincoln Lives/(device)/New York/Vantage Press/Washington. Chicago./Hollywood. Toronto.

Brochure, cloth, 5½" x 8¼", 59 pp., illus., price $2.00.

TROUBETZKOY, ULRICH **1957-52**

Out of the Wilderness/Ulrich Troubetzkoy/Carrie Hoffecker National Poetry Award/1957.

Pamphlet, flexible boards, 5¾" x 9", 23 pp., price $1.50. Limited to 1000 copies. Published by the Wilmington Poetry Society & Delaware Writers Inc., P. O. Box 1005, Wilmington, 99, Delaware.

1958

CURRENT, RICHARD W. **1958-1**

The Lincoln/Nobody Knows/ by/Richard N. Current, Ph. D./ Woman's College, University of North Carolina/Greensboro, North Carolina/(device)/Address at Annual Meeting/Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin/ Madison/February 11, 1958/ (Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 7¼" x 10", 22 pp.

INTERLAKEN MILLS **1958-2**

(Photo of Lincoln Memorial statue)/The Day Mr. Lincoln/ Spoke at Gettysburg/(Cover title).

Pamplet, paper, 6¾" x 9¾", (8) pp., illus. Published by Interlaken Mills, Fiskerville, Rhode Island.

NEWMAN, RALPH G. **1958-3**

Lincoln/by Ralph Newman/(Lincoln photo M 25)/ What manner of man was he, who could be so/humble and so inspired, so simple and so mighty,/so endearing and enduring?/(Cover title).

Pamphlet, paper, 5¼" x 7¼", (16) pp., illus. Copyright 1958 by George W. Stewart, Publisher, Inc.

LINCOLN NATIONAL LIFE FOUNDATION **1958-4**

Lincoln Lore/Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation/Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor/Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana/Number 1439 January 1958—Number 1441 March 1958/(Caption title).

Folder, paper, 8½" x 11", 4 pp., illus. Number 1439. A. Lincoln: Manner of Buoying Vessels . . .; 1440, The Bancroft Oration . . .; 1441, The Department of Agriculture.